

# Abstract

## 5 The Ombudsman and the need for an honest press

MANUEL LOPEZ

The author starts by indicating that, in the communicational universe in which we are immersed, the lack of confidence of the public should not be attempted to be overcome alone, as is happening now, through the increase in speed of transmission of information or coloured front pages, at times supplied with female bodies which puts their existence in doubt, but, also, with a high degree of honesty on the part of enterprises and professionals. The battle should be placed with a policy of open doors on the part of the Press, Radio and Television and one of these is the creation of the figure of the defensor of the reader, the listener or the viewer, in short of a communication Syndicate of Wrongs.

In this line, Manuel López goes on to study the figure of the Ombudsman who, in form of section, has been published in the daily "El País" since November 1985, with weekly periodicity and always on Sunday. It is the first Ombudsman to appear in the Spanish press and follows the examples of the north American press, especially that of the United States.

According to what could be read on the pages of "El País" on November 17th 1985, the Ombudsman is in charge of seeing to the complaints and suggestions of readers on the content of the paper and guarantees that in the treatment of the news of "El País" professional rules are observed". The author exposes in his work that, unfortunately, it is not known what rules are meant, since there is no professional statute in force or endorsed by all, that is, Associations, Guilds and Unions of Communication.

In this first note of "El País", it also says "The Ombudsman is a figure who is instituted in newspapers in order to guarantee readers rights". Then the newspaper explains how the news has been treated or why certain editorial decisions have been taken. "Fundamentally, it attempts to be a tie of dialogue of the medium with its readers and serves to analyse and solve their doubts and complaints".

The figure or the Ombudsman of "El País" does not have executive responsibilities in the paper's structure, he has power to act of his own accord and is situated above the hierarchical schemes of the paper itself, save the exception of the director who is the one who decided to create the figure of the defensor of the reader.

Manuel López then goes on to analyse the section of the Ombudsman of "El País" in his first year of existence —from November 26th 1985 to November 23rd 1986— from which the following most important data are taken:

Total of notes appeared in the section: 112.

Section of the paper with most protagonism: Spanish Politics (National), with 15 notes.

Section of the paper with less protagonism: People and Social Life, with one single note.

Promotors of the 112 notes: The reader affected: 54; the reader not affected: 41; the Ombudsman: 19. (There are more requests than the total sum of notes because some themes had been proposed jointly by more than one of the agents mentioned).

Global reason of complaint: For the paper's disinformation: 32; For onjective error: 30; For wrong interpretation: 10; Others: 11; Replies of Ombudsman: There was subjectivism: 16; There was involuntary error: 15; The information was written in a hurry: 12; Freedom of style was not respected: 12; Others: 2. (In some cases the Ombudsman did not clarify some questions or believed that the reader was not right).

Was there blame on anyone's part? The office made the mistake: 52; Mistakes came from outside: 42.

In the conclusions of the study Manuel Lopez believes that the section of the Ombudsman is converted into a window which allows the entrance of fresh air into the profession and permits the public to see into this mysterious world of a newspaper, a Radio or television station. What the Ombudsman did not inform was the criteria with which the notes to be published are chosen — between November 1985 and November 1987— 284 letters were received and 231 telephone calls, while in the same period, only 236 notes were published? The Ombudsman of "El País" has served also to deal with matters of great professional interest: privacy, the right honour, politicism of journalists and plagiarism.

## 18 An example of anarchism and journalism in the Catalonia of the '30s.

SUSANNA TAVERA i GARCIA

In this work the author makes reference to the work "How a newspaper is made" a leaflet of 48 pages published, before the outbreak of the Civil War, by the former director of "Worker's Solidarity", the anarchist Felipe Aláiz. "How a newspaper is made" appeared as a first number of a fortnightly collection titled "An hour of Reading", which, almost certainly took as model the prestigious "Culture Notebooks" the anarchic-trade-unionist Mari Civera published in Valencia. "An Hour of Reading" defines itself as a "Library of the Self-taught Militant" and aimed to devote itself to the spreading of the sciences, geography, history, art, letters, economy and, finally, all their technical applications. Its director was Alfonso Martínez Rico, a former captain of the engineers, a perso-